



**OCTOBER 6, 2009**

## **HEALTH UPDATE**

### **Update on Infection Control Practices for 2009 H1N1 Influenza**

On May 3, 2009, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed interim guidance for the prevention and control of novel H1N1 influenza in health-care settings. On May 7, 2009, the North Dakota Department of Health issued guidance for infection control for novel H1N1.

The North Dakota document was developed through a cooperative effort among North Dakota infection control practitioners, infectious disease physicians and the North Dakota Department of Health. This document provides general guidance for health-care workers regarding infection control measures as they relate to the new H1N1 influenza virus. This guidance applies to all health-care personnel (e.g. employees, students, contractors, attending clinicians and volunteers) whose activities involve contact with patients. These recommendations represent the minimum level of infection control precautions; clinicians or infection control practitioners may recommend increased levels of infection control as indicated by a specific patient or situation.

The North Dakota guidelines differ from the published interim guidelines from CDC. Differences in these guidelines and the guidance published by CDC primarily are reflected in the use of surgical masks versus N95 respirators for routine care of patients with suspected or confirmed H1N1 infections. The guidance issued by the North Dakota Department of Health more closely reflect CDC's guidance for the prevention and control of seasonal influenza in health-care facilities and the World Health Organization's guidance for infection control for novel H1N1 influenza.

The rationale for the development of North Dakota specific guidance was based on the observed severity and epidemiology of the novel H1N1 virus being similar to that of known seasonal influenza viruses. Also taken into consideration with the development of the guidance was the administrative and practical applications of the recommendations in terms of available materials and ease of implementation.

The North Dakota Department of Health has been in conversation with the Bismarck Area Office of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regarding regulatory issues surrounding recommendations for the prevention of H1N1 in health-care facilities. We were advised by the Area Director that OSHA's Respiratory Standard and current CDC guidelines will be used for infection control in health-care facilities.

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The North Dakota Department of Health will not be making any changes to their recommendations at this time and the CDC is currently in the process of revising their recommendations. When CDC revisions are published, the North Dakota Department of Health will take into consideration the new guidance and make a determination how best to proceed, likely in consultation with key stakeholders in the state.

For more information, please contact the North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Disease Control by calling 701.328.2378 or 800.472.2180.

*Categories of Health Alert messages:*

- *Health Alert conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.*
- *Health Advisory provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.*
- *Health Update provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.*
- *Health Information provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.*

*This message is being sent to local public health units, clinics, hospitals, physicians, tribal health, North Dakota Nurses Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Medical Association, and hospital public information officers.*